

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

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R 131849Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0924

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 14256

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF NEWLY ELECTED UDR SECRETARY

GENERAL GUENA

REF: PARIS 12686

SUMMARY: CHARGE CALLED ON UDR SECRETARY GENERAL YVES GUENA TO DISCUSS FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS. GUENA IS HARD AT WORK PREPARING HIS PARTY FOR THE 1977 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, IN WHICH HE FEELS THE MAJORITY WILL SUFFER, AND THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, IN WHICH HE FEELS THE MAJORITY HAS A GOOD CHANCE. GUENA EXPLAINED HIS REASONS FOR BACKING THE IDEA OF MULTIPLE FIRST ROUND CANDIDATES WITHIN THE MAJORITY FOR FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS, BUT EXPRESSED DOUBTS OVER CURRENT GOF PLAN TO RAISE FIRST-ROUND MINIMUM VOTES (REQUIRED FOR A CANDIDATE TO RUN IN THE SECOND ROUND) FROM 10 TO 15 PERCENT. HE BELIEVES THAT THE GAULLIST PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE MAIN STAY OF THE MAJORITY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. END SUMMARY

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1. I CALLED ON YVES GUENA AT UDR PARTY HEADQUARTERS ON MAY 13 TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON HIS ELECTION TO HEAD THE PARTY AND SOUND HIM OUT ON CURRENT UDR THINKING. MOST OF OUR CONVERSATION WAS SPENT ON FRENCH ELECTIONS, PAST AND FUTURE, AND ON UDR POLITICAL STRATEGY FOR THE COMING MONTHS. HE STATED THAT ALTHOUGH THE CANTONAL ELECTIONS WERE A ROUGH SETBACK FOR THE MAJORITY, CONFIDENCE HAS NOW RETURNED. IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1977 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WHICH GUENA ADMITS WILL AT BEST BE HARD TO SWALLOW FOR THE MAJORITY, THE UDR IS SOUNDING OUT THE 400 KEY CITIES IN FRANCE TO DETERMINE WHAT TACTICS TO FOLLOW. UNLIKE THE SOCIALISTS, THE COMMUNISTS AND THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, THE UDR IS NOT TAKING POLLS OR MAKING HEAD-COUNTS, BUT RATHER "USING ITS NOSE TO SNIFF OUT THE TERRITORY." GUENA FEELS POLLS ARE VALID ONLY UP TO A POINT, THEN INTUITION MUST TAKE OVER. HE PREDICTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT TOULOUSE WOULD FALL TO THE LEFT IN 1977, BUT THAT LILLE WOULD BE WON BY THE MAJORITY. (CURRENT MAYOR OF LILLE PIERRE MAUROY IS ONE OF PS LEADER MITTERRAND'S HEIRS PRESUMPTIVE.)

2. THE QUESTION OF MAJORITY "PRIMARIES" CAME UP. UNTIL A FEW DAYS AGO THE UDR HAD BACKED THE IDEA THAT THE MAJORITY PARTIES (UDR, IR, CENTER) SHOULD AGREE ON A SINGLE CANDIDATE IN THE FIRST ROUND OF FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. NOW GUENA HAS JUST ANNOUNCED THAT THE UDR IS REVERSING ITS POSITION AND ACCEPTING THE IR'S POINT OF VIEW (OF HAVING MULTIPLE CANDIDATES). HE TOLD ME HIS PARTY'S REASON FOR SO DOING WAS TO INSURE THAT THE CENTER PARTIES COULD STILL REASSERT THEMSELVES, THEREBY HE HOPES INSPIRING THE CENTRIST ELECTORATE TO VOTE MAJORITY IN THE SECOND ROUND EVEN IF THE CENTER CANDIDATE IS DEFEATED IN THE FIRST. COMMENT: FRUSTRATED CENTER VOTERS IN FRANCE HAVE AN HISTORIC TENDENCY TO GO LEFT WHEN ONE OF THEIR OWN IS NOT AN ELECTION CHOICE, AND THIS DECISION ON THE PART OF THE UDR IS BASICALLY A STOP-GAP MEASURE.

3. GUENA FEELS THE CURRENT PLANNING IN GOF -- TO RAISE
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THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF VOTES ACQUIRED IN FIRST-ROUND VOTING IN ORDER TO BE LEGALLY ENTITLED TO RUN IN THE SECOND (10 PERCENT TO 15 PERCENT) -- IS QUESTIONABLE. THIS WOULD OSTENSIBLY HURT THAT VERY CENTER THE MAJORITY IS TRYING SO CAREFULLY TO WOO. BIG-NAME CENTER CANDIDATES LIKE LECANUET, MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND MAYOR OF ROUEN, DO NOT BRING MANY VOTES TO THE MAJORITY BUT ADD PRESTIGE JUST THE SAME.

4. GUENA HAD NOTHING BUT GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUT PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC, HIS ENERGY, HIS ROLE AS "COORDINATOR OF THE MAJORITY." ON THE OTHER HAND HE WAS NOTICEABLY RETICENT ON GISCARD, GIVING THE IMPRESSION

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THAT ALL PROBLEMS ARE NOT YET RESOLVED BETWEEN THE TWO MAIN FACTIONS OF THE MAJORITY, AND EVEN LESS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GOF'S CURRENT REFORM PROGRAM. HE FEELS THE PRESIDENT IS THE MAN WHO SHOULD RESOLVE THE MOUNTING BATTLE OVER WHO WILL BE FIRST MAYOR OF PARIS, STATE SECRETARY TAITTINGER (UDR) OR IR PRESIDENT JACQUES DOMINATI. ASKED ABOUT THE EFFECT OF RECENT US COMMENTS ON THE DANGERS OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS, HE COMMENTED THAT WE SHOULD STOP INTERFERING IN FRENCH DOMESTIC POLITICS. "YOUR FRENCHMAN DOESN'T LIKE THAT," HE SAID.

5. COMMENT: FORMER MINISTER GUENA IS A POLITICAL TACTICIAN AND SEEMS TO RELISH PREPARING FOR THE COMING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS. WHILE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE MARCH 1977 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, HE IS CONVINCED THAT THE 1978 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IS FAR FROM A LOST CAUSE. HE FEELS, RIGHTFULLY, THAT THE UDR IS THE ONLY PARTY IN FRANCE THAT COMES CLOSE TO HAVING THE ORGANIZA-
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TION AND MOTIVATION OF THE COMMUNISTS, AND AS SUCH INCORPORATES THE REAL HOPE OF THE MAJORITY. INTELLECTUALLY ALLIED TO THE "BARON" SIDE OF UDR THINKING, HE NONETHELESS PRESERVES CLOSE TIES WITH "JACQUES" (CHIRAC), WHOSE COMBATIVE STYLE HE SHARES. FILLING THE CHAIR HELD BY A LONG LINE OF ILLUSTRIOUS POLITICIANS AND STATESMEN -- FROM DE GAULLE TO SANGUINETTI -- GUENA CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAKE HIS AND HIS PARTY'S VOICE HEARD WITH INCREASING FORCE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
GAMMON

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